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Monday, 9 February 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Takasu	(Japan)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Ms. Villalobos
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

First report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2009/59)

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09-23183 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

First report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2009/59)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its procedural rules of procedure to Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg of Germany, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. von der Schulenburg to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding also reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Frank Majoor, Chairman of the Sierra Leone configuration of the of the Netherlands.

It is so decided.

I invite Ambassador Majoor to take a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/59, which contains the First Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, and Ambassador Frank Majoor, Chairman of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I now give the floor to Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg.

Mr. von der Schulenburg: Mr. President, I am grateful for the opportunity to present to you the First Report of the Secretary-General on the recently established United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2009/59). As we meet here today, Sierra Leone is entering its eighth year of peace. It was in January 2002 that the then President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah declared an end to the 11 years of an often brutal war.

Since then, Sierra Leone has made great strides. Today, there are no longer any armed opposition groups in Sierra Leone and the use of arms in political or ethnic disputes has almost completely disappeared. Over the last seven years, we have seen a number of democratic elections and the peaceful transition from one elected Government to another. There have also been two important and peaceful local Government elections and a number of by-elections since 2004, the most recent election having taken place in July of last year. Also promising are the signs that non-governmental associations are increasingly engaging in free and fair elections to select or replace their leaders.

Sierra Leone has also made considerable progress in rebuilding key national institutions. The performance of the National Electoral Commission and the Sierra Leone Police during the recent elections has been very professional. Sierra Leone now has a working Human Rights Commission and the first steps have been taken towards a decentralization of power towards the provinces.

Although exact statistics are hard to come by, there is a general agreement among experts that poverty levels in Sierra Leone have dropped since the year 2003. Furthermore, a recent health survey would indicate that child mortality rates have declined considerably, providing an example of how focused Government intervention, together with decisive support from international development partners, can produce results.

Despite these encouraging achievements, much remains to be done, and Sierra Leone's young democracy continues to face daunting challenges. Sierra Leone remains one of the poorest countries in the world and is at the bottom of Human Development Index created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Despite all the progress that has been made, many Sierra Leoneans do not yet fully benefit from any peace dividend; that is especially the case for many rural poor and the country's youth.

Almost a year and a half into the tenure of the new Government, expectations among many Sierra Leoneans remain high that the new Government will deliver on the promises it made during the elections. For the Government, it is now very important not to lose momentum, to stay the course and implement the many reforms and plans it has committed itself to put into place. The President's Agenda for Change provides an excellent policy document to lead and focus the work of the Government over the coming years.

In addition, we, the international development partners for Sierra Leone, should stay the course and fulfil our commitments, even in the difficult times of a global financial crisis. In a region that is beset with social, political and economic problems, it is important that we all work together with the Government to make Sierra Leone a success story and turn it into a beacon for democracy, stability and economic progress. That job has not yet been done; it will require continued Government efforts and sustained international cooperation.

Many donors have come to the support of Sierra Leone. In addition to international organizations, such as the United Nations family, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank, I would like to applaud in particular the sustained support that Sierra Leone has been receiving over the years from the British Government and the European Commission, as well as from its regional partners, in particular Nigeria. In addition, other countries such as China, Ireland, Germany, the United States, Japan and Italy have proven valuable and reliable partners to Sierra Leone. I would also like to welcome Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and India — States that have now joined in supporting Sierra Leone. Nonetheless, we will have to continue making all efforts to even further expand the donor base for the country.

Coming out of a conflict and trying to consolidate peace will never be an easy task, and as we travel down the road towards greater stability and economic progress, we must be fully aware of the risks that lie ahead. Only then can we deal with them effectively. Therefore, I believe it is of the utmost importance that President Koroma in his Agenda for Change has clearly reiterated his Government's determination to combat the three most imminent threats on Sierra Leone's road to peace and prosperity — corruption, illicit drug trafficking and youth unemployment.

Let me be more specific. The Government has made considerable progress on stamping out corruption. The newly structured Anti-Corruption Commission has made a credible start, and a recently approved anti-corruption law provides the legal basis for decisive action. However, old habits die slowly, and time and perseverance are required for them to be overcome. However, I remain confident that the Government is determined to ensure that any real or perceived administrative mismanagement or corruption will not derail the strong commitments it has made to the people of Sierra Leone and its international development partners to deal with the problem.

The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and the United Nations country team stand ready to continue to work with of the Anti-Corruption Commission. In this context, I also welcome the work of the UNDP together with other development partners in supporting the Government's civil service reforms with the aim of creating a more transparent and effective Government. I also welcome the recently established presidential committee to review all mining contracts of the country, which were a source of so much conflict in the past.

With respect to illicit drugs, the trafficking of illicit drugs from Latin America through West Africa en route to European markets has created immense

political and socio-economic challenges in large parts of the subregion. This threat has now reached the shores of Sierra Leone. Thankfully, Sierra Leone is still in the prevention stage; illicit drugs have not yet penetrated its society and undermined its institutions. The fight against illicit drug trafficking can be won, and the decisive actions taken by President Koroma following the seizure of the plane loaded with illicit drugs in July of last year are particularly commendable.

The financial and logistical power of international drug cartels greatly surpasses the resources that are available to countries such as Sierra Leone; the street value of the recently seized cocaine is estimated to exceed the Government's entire budget for this year. Sierra Leone will therefore need strong and reliable international support. In this context, I would like to thank the British Government, the United States as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their prompt action in support of Sierra Leone's law enforcement services. I would also like to thank the Netherlands for considering funding a sizeable assistance programme to strengthen Sierra Leone's law enforcement agencies. Further, I welcome plans by Venezuela and Colombia to strengthen their cooperation with law enforcement authorities in West Africa and stand ready to facilitate any cooperation that they would also like to extend to Sierra Leone.

With regard to youth unemployment, one of the most disheartening aspects of many post-conflict societies is that young people, instead of being a country's most productive resource and a symbol of its future, may indeed be perceived as a potential threat to peace and stability. We estimate that in Sierra Leone approximately 1 million young people are either underemployed or simply unemployed. Despite the magnitude of the problem, attempts to find solutions to youth unemployment have remained modest.

In order to deal with that problem, the Government is in the process of setting up a National Youth Commission. It is now important that that be followed up with a number of concrete programmes designed to make a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of young men and women. All of this will require a focused and well coordinated approach on the part of the Government and its international development partners.

Allow me to add a few words on our own behalf. As required by the Council, we have now established a new United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. The essential groundwork has been laid, but more work still needs to be done if the Office is become fully functional.

We see the new United Nations Office as a vehicle for the partnership between the United Nations — including the Peacebuilding Commission and, indeed, the Security Council — and the democratically elected Government of Sierra Leone. It will be our primary task to assist the country and its Government through the difficult process of consolidating peace.

In that spirit, we see ourselves at the forefront of the development and testing of a new and, above all, practical concept of effective peacebuilding. Compared with the previous mission, our new Office is much smaller but, at the same time, much more substantive, enabling us to deal professionally with the many important mandates that the Council has given us. More important, we have been able to develop a stronger, integrated approach combining the political mandate given to UNIPSIL with the development and humanitarian mandates given to our sister United Nations agencies.

The result of that new approach is the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone, a document that has recently received the endorsement of the Peacebuilding Commission. Let me take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues in the United Nations country team for their exceptional readiness to work together for the good of Sierra Leone, as well as for their great spirit of mutual support.

Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone needs sustained political and financial support from the international community. Here, we will continue to rely on the vital support that we have received from the Peacebuilding Commission. In particular, the personal commitment, support and leadership that His Excellency Ambassador Frank Majoor has extended to the United Nations family, my team and myself over the critical period of the transition from a peacekeeping to a peacebuilding mission is highly appreciated.

We intend to further strengthen this important relationship between the Peacebuilding Commission in New York and the Peacebuilding Office in Freetown. Ambassador Majoor and I have been discussing the possibility of holding, together with the Government, a special session of the Peacebuilding Commission either here in New York or in Freetown to rally international

support behind the President's Agenda for Change and the United Nations Joint Vision.

Peacebuilding will not be achieved overnight. There will be no clear benchmarks to tell us if and when we have succeeded. We need patience, and we need to avoid succumbing to undue rush. Peacebuilding must be nurtured, and that requires time.

At the same time, however, peacebuilding brings with it a sense of urgency. After a conflict, expectations are high and many of the underlying problems that once led to the civil conflict need to be urgently addressed. Together with the Government, we will therefore have to find the right balance between patience and perseverance, on the one hand, and the need to act urgently, on the other. Finding the right balance may largely determine our success in peacebuilding.

Finally, let me reassure members of the commitment and determination of all my United Nations colleagues in UNIPSIL and our sister agencies to make peacebuilding in Sierra Leone a success. As the first of the new type of fully integrated United Nations peacebuilding offices, we all hope that, with the Council's help, we will also be able to make Sierra Leone an example for other countries that may choose a similar path out of conflict.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the confidence invested in me and to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Kamal Dervis, United Nations Development Programme Administrator, for their support. In addition, I wish to thank the Government of Sierra Leone and, in particular, President Koroma for the warm and cordial welcome that I have received in their country.

The President: I thank Mr. von den Schulenburg for his very comprehensive briefing. We are delighted to have him here this morning.

I now give the floor to Mr. Majoor.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to participate in today's meeting on Sierra Leone in my capacity as Chair of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. I very much welcome this opportunity to brief the Council on the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission in partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) in Freetown.

On 15 December, the Commission and the Government of Sierra Leone undertook a review of the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. Drawing on a comprehensive progress report prepared with the support of UNIPSIL and the Peacebuilding Support Office, the review meeting resulted in concrete recommendations for all relevant stakeholders, including the Security Council.

As noted in the review meeting, significant progress has been made in further consolidating peace in Sierra Leone. However, impressive achievements in the areas of peace and security have not yet resulted in concrete peace dividends for the population. The country continues to face difficult socio-economic challenges, and the legacies of the decade-long civil war remain largely unaddressed.

Youth unemployment and marginalization represent one of the greatest threats to Sierra Leone's stability. The lack of progress in that area is particularly worrying in light of the increased use of Sierra Leone as a transit point for drug trafficking. An indolent youth population with few opportunities for advancement and gainful employment is vulnerable to becoming foot soldiers for and victims of a drug culture. Furthermore, the global food and financial crises risk undermining the Government's efforts to meet the high expectations of the population and to provide the much-awaited peace dividends.

The Government of Sierra Leone is aware of those challenges and emerging threats and is taking steps to address them. The President's Agenda for Change, which was welcomed by the Peacebuilding Commission at its review meeting, represents a comprehensive policy statement and a road map for reform. It also establishes key priorities and assistance modalities for the country.

Having charted a clear path towards reform, the Government must now show the resolve to act and deliver on its promises. In order to do so, it will need sustained support from its national and international partners. The Peacebuilding Commission has called on all stakeholders to rally behind the priorities and objectives of the President's Agenda for Change and to provide adequate support for its implementation.

The United Nations has played and must continue to play an important role in supporting Sierra Leone's efforts for peace consolidation. The creation of the first United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone is a groundbreaking innovation for the United Nations system. Under the leadership of Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations family in Sierra Leone is taking critical steps in creating a truly integrated vision and approach with regard to peacebuilding. The Joint Vision for the United Nations Family in Sierra Leone, which was welcomed by the Peacebuilding Commission, is a critical achievement in its own right and must be well resourced and implemented. In order to do so effectively, UNIPSIL must be fully staffed and work in close partnership with other bilateral and multilateral partners. Support from the United Nations is especially needed in the areas of youth employment and empowerment, addressing drug trafficking and organized crime and further good governance reforms, including support for the constitutional review process and the work of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In the current global financial environment, there may be pressures to shift limited resources from a relatively stable country such as Sierra Leone to other regions in the world where urgent crises occur. However, we must bear in mind that the peace consolidation agenda in Sierra Leone is not yet finished. There is a continuing need to maintain, and even expand, existing levels of donor support. Otherwise, we risk reversing the gains made to date and impacting not only the stability of Sierra Leone but the whole subregion. As a result, the Peacebuilding Commission will redouble its efforts to mobilize additional resources for peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, especially through broadening the donor base and strengthening partnerships with the private sector. We are considering ways to ensure that in the months ahead, as Mr. von der Schulenburg indicated.

In conclusion, allow me to commend the Government of Sierra Leone and all the national stakeholders for their constructive engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission. Let me also use this occasion to thank UNIPSIL for assisting the Peacebuilding Commission and the Government of Sierra Leone in that regard. The integrated structure of UNIPSIL and the strategic leadership by the Executive Representative will continue to be extraordinarily important for effective United Nations support of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone): Let me start by registering my delegation's sincere appreciation, Sir, for your having organized this debate, which in our view is a clear manifestation of the Council's commitment to monitoring and sustaining the momentum of the peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone. My warmest felicitations go to you on your assumption of the presidency for the month of February 2009. It is a pleasant coincidence to see you directing the affairs of the Council on a topic of this nature, given that you were the immediate outgoing Chair of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission. I assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation during your tenure.

I would like to pay special tribute to the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations, Ambassador Frank Majoor, and his dedicated team for their untiring efforts and sustained commitment to implementing the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, particularly, during the two challenging formative years of the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement with Sierra Leone.

My appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive report and observations on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), contained in document S/2009/59.

I also wish to thank the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, for the statement he has just delivered and to re-echo his call for a steady hand, patience and the need to avoid an undue rush, as peacebuilding needs to be nurtured and needs time. Sierra Leone is entering its eighth year of peace and stability and, by any yardstick, has been a success story of United Nations peacebuilding efforts. Despite that, there are still serious challenges to grapple with. We cannot afford to sacrifice the gains we have scored over the last eight years of peace in Sierra Leone out of inertia and self-satisfaction.

The adoption of Security Council resolution 1829 (2008) establishing UNIPSIL was another significant step in the United Nations peacebuilding engagement in Sierra Leone. UNIPSIL is effectively the fourth-generation phase of United Nations presence in Sierra Leone, which is a clear manifestation of the Government's cooperation and determination to make meaningful change and move the country forward from its dark recent past.

The second biannual review of progress in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework was conducted on 15 December 2008, a few months after the operationalization of the integrated peacebuilding mission, UNIPSIL, in October. That review acknowledged the strides Sierra Leone has made since the end of the war in 2002. We have witnessed two highly acclaimed democratic electoral processes at both the national and local government levels, unparalleled in any post-conflict setting. Except for the all important issue of reparations, other key aspects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations are being implemented. The Human Rights Commission is fully operational in all four provincial headquarters, and its first report has been presented to parliament for consideration. The most important phase of the constitutional review process, namely, identifying the pitfalls and shortcomings of the 1991 constitution, has been completed, and steps are under way for the next stage of national consultation and possible amendments. However, we must not forget that addressing the political concerns of the populace and their basic socio-economic needs are inextricably linked and need to go hand in hand.

A number of gender-related laws have been enacted to address problems of gender-based violence and exclusions or disparities based on gender. The judiciary, police and military have all undergone significant reforms, which are currently paying beneficial dividends. Security and stability in the country have improved considerably. The climate is now conducive to investment, both in terms of the security situation and the improved conditions for doing business in the country. Stringent laws have been enacted to tackle corruption and the emerging threat of narcotics and drug trafficking in the subregion. More importantly, in addition to the important prosecutorial independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Commission has demonstrated sufficient commitment and determination in the ongoing implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

We have not been alone in the process. Without partnership with the United Nations, our multilateral and bilateral partners, including the international financial institutions, such progress would not have been achieved.

Despite the progress made thus far, the challenges facing the Government are daunting. Though internal revenue generation is improving, the Government's capacity to address the commitments contained in the Framework, including tackling other programmes aimed at achieving internationally agreed development goals and the Millennium Development Goals, remains grossly inadequate. The much-needed budget support to Government is waning. Such a situation exacerbates the risk of heightening the threats associated with increasing youth unemployment and the new wave of drug trafficking in the subregion.

With the recent developments in the neighbouring sister countries and the members of the Mano River Union, security in the subregion is a cause for concern. More than ever, Sierra Leone, like other members of the Union, requires greater international attention if the Mano River basin is to attain peace, security and stability, as well as meaningful growth and development. For our part, His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma has, through his Agenda for Change, clearly and succinctly articulated his strategic vision for turning the country around. Furthermore, the Government, together with the Peacebuilding Commission, also endorses the supporting role of UNIPSIL on the ground and of the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone, formulated under the leadership of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General.

My delegation urges the Peacebuilding Commission and all international and bilateral partners, including our traditional and non-traditional donors, to rally support behind the Agenda for Change and the United Nations Joint Vision. The Government is fully cognizant of the fact that the responsibility for consolidating the peace and bailing our people out of poverty lies primarily with it. Indeed, it is committed to the full implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework as a necessary requirement for the promotion of peace, stability and sustainable development in the country, as well as the attainment

of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The biannual review of the Peacebuilding Commission in December 2008 reaffirmed the need for all parties — the Government of Sierra Leone, the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations, bilateral and multilateral partners and other relevant stakeholders — to remain focused and as dedicated as ever and to be promptly forthcoming in addressing their respective commitments.

I should like to conclude by noting that, building on the meaningful gains already achieved, it is the avowed pledge of the Government of Sierra Leone to continue to work in collaboration with all our development partners to sustain the momentum by moving forward the Agenda for Change, together with the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family. My Government supports the holding of the proposed special session of the Peacebuilding Commission, either in Freetown or in New York, in order to rally international support for the Agenda for Change and the United Nations Joint Vision.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Since this is the first time that I am speaking in an open debate under your leadership, Mr. President, I am pleased to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I am fully confident that you will guide our work towards the best possible results.

I would like to commend the excellent manner in which Ambassador Ripert, Permanent Representative of France, and the delegation of France conducted the work of the Council during the month of January. I should also like to extend my thanks to Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Sierra Leone and the activities of United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). I should also like to thank Ambassador Frank Majoor, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands and Chairman of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ambassador Shekou Touray, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, for their valuable contributions.

The report of the Secretary-General under consideration today (S/2009/59) and the briefing given by Mr. von der Schulenburg have clearly shown that Sierra Leone is on the verge of becoming the latest success story from West Africa. Great achievements have been made in all areas and the political and security situation seems to be stable in general. This progress encourages the ongoing joint efforts of the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone to build and promote peace and establish stable and democratic State institutions with a view to overcoming the impact of civil strife and conflict and to beginning the process of development and the consolidation of a peaceful society throughout Sierra Leone.

We are well aware that the Government still faces many challenges despite the great achievements accomplished to date. We also know that a climate of mistrust and suspicion still prevails between the two principal political parties in Sierra Leone. However, the cordial interaction that is developing between those parties, with the encouragement of UNIPSIL, is a source of deep satisfaction and optimism for us.

Despite the encouraging economic performance of Sierra Leone in 2008, certain issues are a cause for concern, such declining export revenues and remittances from abroad, as well as the possible reduction of official development assistance to Sierra Leone in 2009 and its potential adverse impact on financing for the social sector. We therefore support the proposal to hold a special session of the Peacebuilding Commission to consider stepping up donations and assistance through voluntary contributions to Sierra Leone.

Libya considers the Agenda for Change of President Koroma and the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone to be two very important instruments for accelerating the peacebuilding process. President Koroma's Agenda focuses on combining economic growth and human resource development. It determines priorities and emphasizes that the continued corruption, escalating illegal drug trafficking and youth unemployment are the principal threats to peace and stability in Sierra Leone. We agree with President Koroma in this regard.

The Joint Vision of the United Nations Family in Sierra Leone aims to assist the Government in consolidating peace. It identifies four principal programmatic priorities: the economic integration of rural areas in Sierra Leone, the engagement of unemployed youth, equitable access to health care, and the enhancement of good governance. We hope that

United Nations bodies and donors will provide generous support to implement both the Agenda for Change and the Joint Vision.

The use and exploitation of Sierra Leone as a transit area for illicit drug trafficking and the presence of organized crime are problems of concern and must be confronted as priority matters before they escalate and create an even more dangerous situation. There is no doubt that promoting security and cooperation with the countries of the region will help us to better address those two problems, but it will also require the support of UNIPSIL and donors to achieve those goals. In that connection, we commend the initiative of UNIPSIL in developing an action plan to address illicit drug trafficking and organized crime in Sierra Leone, based on the Regional Action Plan adopted in Cape Verde.

Libya agrees with the report of the Secretary-General that one of the cornerstones of post-conflict peacebuilding is dealing with the tragedies and injustices of the civil war. My delegation therefore believes that it is important to implement the priorities and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to implement a reparations programme for victims of the civil war as soon as possible. Libya calls upon donors to provide funding for the proposed multi-donor trust fund for that purpose. We also believe that the constitutional review process must occur quickly and we welcome the readiness of UNIPSIL to provide technical and advisory assistance for that process.

Libya, within its capacities, has provided assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone in the form of grants and investment projects and has urged the financial institutions of which it is a member also to provide assistance to that end. My country intends to continue its assistance.

In conclusion, we commend the efforts of UNIPSIL, in particular in calling upon the Sierra Leone parties to establish dialogue and enhance national cohesion and unity, in promoting the capacities of civil society, and in providing parliamentary assistance through support for capacity-building in addressing illicit drug trafficking and human rights. We also commend the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund for their support to the Government of Sierra Leone in the basic areas of peacebuilding.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I join my Libyan colleague in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of February.

Uganda would like to thank Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL); the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Frank Majoor, in his capacity as Chairman of the country-specific configuration on Sierra Leone of the Peacebuilding Commission; and our colleague the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, Ambassador Shekou Touray, for their statements to the Council.

We are pleased to note that the reports provide a positive assessment of the political and economic situation in Sierra Leone and the role of UNIPSIL through the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone. In particular, we commend the Government and the people of Sierra Leone on the ongoing consolidation of stability and security in Sierra Leone following the peaceful transfer of power to President Ernest Bai Koroma through the general elections of 2007, as well as on their successfully holding local elections in July 2008.

It is encouraging to further note that Sierra Leone was able to achieve a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 6 per cent in 2008, underpinned by the expansion of the agricultural, construction and service sectors, although the rate of growth is slightly lower than the 7 per cent that was attained earlier. That is significant for a country that experienced a GDP decline of 17.5 per cent in 1997. As pointed out in the report, the country still faces a number of socio-economic challenges that require a holistic approach. President Koroma's Agenda for Change significantly lays out the basic policies and key priorities of the Government for the next three years in such critical areas as economic growth, delivery of social services and infrastructure development.

Uganda appreciates the commitment of the Government and the development partners to raise $1.2 billion out of the total $2.1 billion required in the medium term to achieve the objectives of the President's Agenda for Change. We note that there is a funding gap of $1 billion to ensure the full implementation of the Agenda.

Given the critical importance of having sufficient funding for this programme, my delegation would like to know what progress has been made so far with regard to the establishment of the multi-donor trust fund and the mobilization of resources to be administered by the United Nations Development Programme. We call upon UNIPSIL to work with all stakeholders to mobilize the requisite funds.

In spite of the current global financial and economic crisis, we request the development partners to ensure timely disbursement of the pledged funds, which are critical to the sustainability of the peacebuilding efforts. It is also a responsibility shared between the Government and the development partners to ensure that the funds are utilized on core activities and projects that spur economic growth, create employment opportunities and improve the standard of living of the people of Sierra Leone.

The implementation of the decentralization and devolution of authority process needs to be expedited because it will enhance service delivery. We urge the Government of Sierra Leone and UNIPSIL to continue strengthening the capacity of national institutions to address such challenges as the fight against corruption and the fight against the increasing cases of drug and human trafficking, as well as piracy.

In conclusion, peacebuilding is a fundamental component of the three pillars which form the mandate of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. It requires reinforcing contributions from a wide range of sectors and a wide range of actors. The progress made so far in Sierra Leone is a good example of what can be achieved through an integrated and collaborative approach among the Government, United Nations agencies and the development partners.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): As this is the first open meeting of the Council in February, I join others in extending to you, Sir, and the Japanese delegation our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month.

I would also like to extend to Ambassador Ripert and the French delegation our sincere appreciation for their effective leadership of the work of the Council last month.

I thank the Secretary-General for his first report on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). I also thank Michael von der Schulenburg, head of the Office, for his detailed presentation of the report. I further thank Ambassador Frank Majoor of the Netherlands for his statement in his capacity as the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on Sierra Leone.

I welcome Ambassador Shekou Touray of Sierra Leone and thank him for his statement.

My delegation notes with pleasure that Sierra Leone continues to achieve progress in implementing its agenda for peace consolidation and socio-economic reconstruction, partially reflected in its overall stable political and security situation, its enhanced dialogue with countries of the Mano River Union aimed at resolving issues of mutual interest, its successful conduct of the local council polls in July 2008, and the determination of its Government to tackle the country's challenges in a peaceful manner. We also note with satisfaction the continued cooperation between Sierra Leone and the United Nations country team, the Peacebuilding Commission and other development partners to strengthen areas of focus and principles of national ownership, mutual accountability and sustained engagement, as contained in the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone.

On another note, while we realize that the situation remains of concern, we commend the Government for its determination and initial success in the fight against corruption. At the same time, we share the Secretary-General's concerns about the unresolved political tension along ethnic and regional lines; the emerging threat of piracy, illicit drug trafficking and illegal trade in natural resources; the marginalization and disempowerment of rural and certain urban communities; the high numbers of unemployed youth; as well as poor economic and social conditions exacerbated by the rising price of food and fuel, which, in our assessment, if not carefully managed have the potential of derailing the peace consolidation process.

We commend the efforts of UNIPSIL in taking over the responsibilities of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone as planned, and in proceeding with its new mandate stipulated in Security Council resolution 1829 (2008). At this critical juncture of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, we believe that coordination among United Nations agencies, regional organizations and international donors

remains essential so as to ensure maximal use of resources, avoid duplication of work and help serve the best interests of Sierra Leone in each particular phase of development.

Finally, let me reaffirm that Viet Nam will continue to support the efforts of Sierra Leone to assume leadership and achieve more concrete progress in sustaining peace and stability, addressing the root causes of the conflict, promoting national reconciliation and unity, accelerating progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and strengthening its international integration process. We call upon the United Nations, the Peacebuilding Commission, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the international community at large to continue to assist the Government of Sierra Leone in these efforts.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/59), introduced by his Executive Representative, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, and our two colleagues, Ambassadors Frank Majoor and Shekou Touray, for their presentations. It is good to see Mr. Von der Schulenburg again in New York.

Over the past two decades, African nations have seen their fair share of political turmoil, armed conflict and economic difficulties. Sierra Leone was certainly no exception, but today Sierra Leone stands as a shining example of how nations can change their destiny and take charge of their future. Turkey welcomes the fact that there is now sustained peace and stability where, not long ago, there was conflict and strife. We are indeed encouraged by the positive developments reflected in the Secretary-General's report. We applaud the people of Sierra Leone for having the courage, wisdom and vision to move beyond past grievances.

To be sure, Sierra Leone still also faces important challenges, and there is much work to be done. The task of concurrently fighting corruption, drug trafficking and youth unemployment cannot be taken lightly, but with the support of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and the international community, we believe that the Agenda for Change in Sierra Leone can be successful. What we are witnessing in Sierra Leone is the fact that multilateralism does indeed work and that the United Nations and the international community can bring about meaningful change for the better, even in the most difficult circumstances.

There is no doubt that the people of Sierra Leone deserve the most credit for achieving peace and stability, but we must also congratulate the United Nations and all its agencies, as well as Sierra Leone's international partners, on providing the support that has been crucial to the success we observe today. In moving forward, we have every confidence that the Executive Representative and UNIPSIL will contribute substantially to the further consolidation of peace, reconciliation and prosperity in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Sir, for calling for this debate on the situation in Sierra Leone, and Mr. Michael von der Schulenberg and Ambassador Frank Majoor for their very comprehensive statements. We also welcome the presence here of our new colleague from Sierra Leone, Ambassador Shekou Touray, whose statement we greatly appreciated.

In considering the prevailing situation in Sierra Leone and the information provided in the various briefings, we have no doubt that strenuous efforts have been made and that tangible progress has been achieved towards that country's recovery. We welcome first the positive evolution in the political and security situations in Sierra Leone, which have been marked not only by the commitment of the actors to engaging in constructive relations, but also by the evident resolve of the Government of Sierra Leone to promote true national reconciliation and ensure solid political and economic governance. The holding of peaceful and transparent local elections in July 2008 further confirmed that vision and, above all, the country's determination to build genuine peace and security.

In that context, we cannot but welcome the establishment in October 2008 of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1829 (2008), and its dynamic efforts, along with all other stakeholders, to support the peacebuilding efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone.

Nevertheless, there are still many challenges to overcome, in particular with regard to the vulnerability of the socio-economic fabric, which has been exacerbated by the current international financial crisis. Those challenges also include the rise in the cost of basic goods, the level of unemployment among

young people and the increase in drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. The Agenda for Change developed by the Government explicitly recognizes that the ongoing scourge of corruption, the emergence of drug trafficking and the high level of unemployment among young people pose the principal risks to peace and stability. In that regard, we welcome the holding Mano River Union summit on 10 December 2008, which provided an opportunity for the heads of State of the Union to share their experiences with regard to security.

With regard to peacebuilding, we have already acknowledged how much has been done, in particular in connection with the contributions of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), the Peacebuilding Commission and bilateral and multilateral partners. In that connection, we welcome the holding of the second biannual review of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework for Sierra Leone, which took place in New York on 15 December 2008, and, in particular, the recommendations provided to the Government of Sierra Leone. We encourage the Government to continue to work closely with the Peacebuilding Commission, and we urge the Commission to support the implementation of the Agenda for Change. We must also continue to encourage all stakeholders to support the strengthening of political and economic governance and the rule of law, in particular the reform of the public, justice and security sectors.

The Peacebuilding Fund's support is especially welcome, for it has allowed, among other things, for the implementation of electoral assistance projects, the strengthening of the capacity of the police and armed forces and the provision of support for the judicial system. We call on the Fund to continue its support and urge all other financial partners to continue to provide support to the authorities of Sierra Leone, despite the international financial crisis.

Against that backdrop, we welcome and support the establishment of the Agenda for Change and the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone. We endorse those two programmes, which aim at linking economic growth to sustainable human development. We hope that, as underscored in paragraph 62 of the report (S/2009/59) of the Secretary-General, the Joint Vision can bring together the political mandate of UNIPSIL with the activities of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

We of course support the desire of Sierra Leone's officials to hold a special session of the Peacebuilding Commission and UNIPSIL with a view to mobilizing the necessary resources to support the Government's Agenda for Change and the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone. It is essential to emphasize the importance of greater efficiency in the activities to support the people of Sierra Leone, as well as to ensure close cooperation between UNIPSIL, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union and international partners and other United Nations missions in the region.

Special attention must, in particular, be paid to supporting economic recovery programmes; strengthening the capacity of institutions responsible for security and combating drug trafficking and organized crime; implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in particular by providing ongoing support for the victim compensation programme; and supporting programmes on good governance and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

At this important stage in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, the international community and the Security Council must continue to remain committed to that country and to provide steadfast support to its Government, which bears the primary responsibility for the establishment of appropriate conditions for peacebuilding and sustainable development. For their part and in line with the means at their disposal, ECOWAS and the African Union will continue to support that country, which today, thanks to the will and political courage of its people and leaders, has been able to establish conditions for peace, reconciliation and socio-economic recovery.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of France, I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I also wish to thank delegations for their kind words about our presidency. I would also like to thank Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Majoor and the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone for their statements.

The statements we have just heard confirm that the situation in Sierra Leone is improving, but that

difficulties also continue. Like the Secretary-General in his report (S/2009/59), we too welcome the significant progress that has been made to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone. As the Security Council has emphasized, the proper conduct of general elections in July 2008 illustrated the commitment of the people of Sierra Leone to peace and democracy. However, the country continues to face difficulties, in particular in the socio-economic area. Those difficulties have worsened as a result of the successive crises that have affected the global economy.

We are also very concerned about the growth of the drug trade in the subregion and its destabilizing impact on the most fragile States. In that connection, France welcomes the holding in Cape Verde, under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), of a ministerial conference on that subject from 28 to 29 October 2008, which produced a draft political statement and a three-year plan of action to combat drugs in West Africa that were adopted at the ECOWAS heads of State and Government conference last December. We hope that that will lead to the strengthening of regional cooperation in that regard. France is prepared to support United Nations efforts in that area, which could benefit from the expertise and assistance to be provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to combat drugs in West Africa.

The implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework for Sierra Leone must continue. We are pleased at the productive cooperation between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission, as illustrated by the Government's adoption of the Framework in January 2008. We also encourage the Government of Sierra Leone to continue to implement the Framework. We would also like to recall the conclusions issued by the Peacebuilding Commission at the end of the second biannual review last December.

Moreover, France welcomes the good pace with which the operations of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) have begun. We supported replacing the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone with an integrated United Nations political office responsible for following up on support for the peacebuilding process, including welcome support for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

We believe that the adoption of the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone, which sets out the way in which United Nations agencies and programmes will work in concert with UNIPSIL and integrates political and developmental initiatives, is an excellent step. Such integration is necessary to supporting hard-won peace and stability in Sierra Leone, to contributing to sustainable socio-economic development and to supporting the Government's poverty-reduction strategy. We call on UNIPSIL to continue down that path as it carries out its mandate.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): Congratulations, Mr. President, on your assumption of the leadership of the Security Council. We would also like again to thank our colleagues from France for their very able leadership of the Council last month.

The United States welcomes the appointment of Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg as the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, and we thank him for his briefing on the new United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). We also wish to thank Ambassador Frank Majoor for his update and leadership in the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ambassador Touray, the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, for his very comprehensive and helpful presentation.

We commend UNIPSIL for the support it has provided the Government and people of Sierra Leone in making their transition from conflict to durable peace. We further applaud President Koroma for his effective leadership, for his Agenda for Change, for his actions, including appointing a new strong head of the Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission, and for undertaking reform of the justice system, enhancing respect for human rights and strengthening the rule of law. We note the important role that UNIPSIL will play in supporting these promising developments and helping Sierra Leone to tackle the underlying causes of instability.

We have come a long way in the ability of the United Nations to help countries and regions resolve, recover from and rebuild after conflict. The type of office that UNIPSIL represents is new instrument for the United Nations to assist post-conflict countries as they make the critical transition from insecurity and violence to lasting peace. It is an innovation that we have added to the toolkit of mechanisms that we can deploy in post-conflict situations. We will need to

follow its progress, both to ensure that as Member States we give the necessary support to help its efforts to succeed and to ensure that this new office has the impact that we all seek.

We are encouraged by the progress that has been made in Sierra Leone. We see real value added from the presence of an integrated office such as UNIPSIL and we hope that UNIPSIL will quickly validate the worth of this integrated approach to peacebuilding. In that regard, we welcome the Joint Vision initiative as an important further step in seeing the United Nations family pull together on behalf of a common strategy to assist Sierra Leone's post-conflict transition.

However, we are concerned that UNIPSIL is not yet at full strength owing to staffing shortages, which underscores the importance of a smooth transition when United Nations missions hand over authority, so that we do not risk losing critical momentum. As a supporter of the Peacebuilding Commission, the United States is encouraged to see that the Commission has facilitated national dialogue on important issues. We also note the contribution that Peacebuilding Fund-supported projects are making to tackle the peacebuilding priorities outlined by the Government of Sierra Leone in conjunction with the Commission.

The United States also applauds the work of United Nations Radio, which has reached out to the people of Sierra Leone from Freetown to rural communities across the country to provide vital information about elections, women's rights, health concerns and many other crucial issues. We support transfer of this service to the Sierra Leone Broadcast Corporation, as well as the use of unallocated peacebuilding funds for the further development of the national public broadcasting service.

We continue to be concerned about the increased use of Sierra Leone as a trans-shipment point for drugs trafficked from South America to Europe. We welcome UNIPSIL's collaboration with the Sierra Leone Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force and will continue to offer our assistance in addressing this threat to Sierra Leone's national security and, indeed, to the security of the region. At the same time, we encourage a regional approach to addressing these issues, in particular narco-trafficking and piracy. The fact that Sierra Leone, despite its impressive progress, remains vulnerable to instability from drugs and crime, youth unemployment of over 60 per cent and persistent poverty, reminds us not only that peace is hard-won, but also that we need to continue to work together within and beyond the United Nations community to effectively confront the challenges that remain.

Sierra Leone reminds us not only of the difficulties of post-conflict transitions, but also of the promise of the United Nations and the broader international community to assist a country and its people to build a better future. The United States fully supports UNIPSIL and will remain steadfast in assisting Sierra Leone to put conflict in its past and move towards a future of lasting development and democracy.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are also grateful to the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. von der Schulenburg, for his assessment of the work of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and on the situation in Sierra Leone. We are also grateful for the briefings by the Chairman of the country configuration for Sierra Leone, Mr. Majoor, and by the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, Mr. Touray.

We are pleased to note that the preservation of political stability is allowing Sierra Leone to move steadily forward on the path of post-conflict reconstruction. It is important that the security situation, both inside the country and on the borders with neighbouring States, is remaining generally calm. There is no doubt that to a large extent that was possible thanks to a competent policy aimed at solving acute problems conducted by the leadership of the country and its President, Mr. Koroma, and thanks to the constructive interaction of the main political forces of the country.

In spite of positive developments in the country, Sierra Leone nevertheless continues to face tremendous transitional challenges, the successful handling of which will greatly determine its long-term stability. First and foremost, we would make reference to the cluster of socio-economic issues mentioned by the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General. Today, their resolution is unfortunately complicated by new challenges, such as the global financial and food crises.

Considerable threats to security are ongoing. Among the most severe, we would mention the problem of transnational organized crime. Of particular concern is the growing threat of the use of the territory

of Sierra Leone as a trans-shipment point for the illicit narcotics trade, noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/59). It is necessary to note that this problem is inherent not only to Sierra Leone but the entire region of West Africa. The most vulnerable countries in the subregion are becoming a springboard for trade in illicit drugs and trafficking in people and small arms and light weapons.

In order to confront this challenge, we need not only national efforts to strengthen the relevant State institutions, first and foremost, security institutions and the judiciary, but also the active participation in a common regional approach, in particular, by implementing the relevant plan of action of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that was adopted at the Abuja summit on 19 December 2008.

We are also very concerned by reports on the more frequent instances of piracy off the shores of Sierra Leone. The ongoing complex challenges in strengthening peace in Sierra Leone confirm the need for further support to this country by the international community. Of great significance is the coordinating work to be done by UNIPSIL. In countering the emerging challenges to security, it is important, especially in the cross-border dimension, to maintain a regular useful interaction between UNIPSIL in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Office for West Africa.

We deeply appreciate the results of the initial period of the work of UNIPSIL and look forward to its maintaining its initial momentum, focusing on implementing the joint United Nations system concept for Sierra Leone to help implement the leadership's three-year reform programme. We welcome the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone, the holding of the first semi-annual review of the peacebuilding strategy last December, which confirmed the urgency of interaction between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission in the priority areas of peacebuilding. We are also pleased to note progress in implementing peacebuilding projects financed by the Peacebuilding Fund.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, the Chinese delegation wishes to congratulate Japan on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We also wish to thank the French delegation for its contribution to the work of the Council. In addition, the Chinese delegation would like to thank Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ambassador Frank Majoor for their briefings, and we welcome the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone.

Over the past year, the political situation in Sierra Leone has remained generally stable. The security situation is moving in a direction favourable to the peacebuilding process, and some progress has also been made in social and economic recovery and development. That is a result of the joint efforts of the Government, the political parties and the people of Sierra Leone, and we welcome it.

On 1 December last year, President Koroma issued his Agenda for Change, which identified priority areas for the Government of Sierra Leone in its economic development efforts. The Secretary-General's Executive Representative, working together with the Government and other relevant actors, also formulated a Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone, which set out priorities for the next phase of the international community's assistance to the country. That indicates that the policy framework and guidelines for peacebuilding in Sierra Leone have been established. The next phase of work will focus on ensuring that their implementation achieves the expected results.

Sierra Leone has experienced many years of civil war, which has taken a heavy toll on its economy and society and inflicted severe suffering on its people. The peace and stability of Sierra Leone are hard-won results. The Government of Sierra Leone and other relevant actors should make full use of the country's current stability, work hard to achieve consensus and devote themselves to national development. At the same time, the international community should continue its assistance to Sierra Leone.

The establishment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) indicates that the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone has entered a new phase. UNIPSIL's mandate incorporates the relevant political, development and human rights mandates of the United Nations agencies in Sierra Leone. That will help the mission to support the Government in its efforts to maintain peace and stability and promote social and economic development. We wish to express our support for the work of the mission and hope that it will achieve effective results.

The impact of the global financial and food crises must not be overlooked. Accordingly, the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone also faces a number of new challenges in that regard. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/59) refers to issues such as the fight against corruption and piracy, which must receive the full attention of all relevant actors.

In combating drug trafficking, we should draw upon the good lessons learned by other countries and recognize that prevention is the key. Our efforts in that area should be part and parcel of our efforts to restore the rule of law and develop the economy in order to improve the country's capacity to suppress drug trafficking activities.

China calls upon the international community, in particular the international financial institutions, to continue to assist Sierra Leone in order to further consolidate the peacebuilding process there and make further progress possible. For its part, China will make its own contribution to the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I wish to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for February and the French mission on its excellent stewardship of the Council last month. It is a great honour to welcome Mr. von der Schulenburg back to the Council in his new capacity as head of a very important integrated mission, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), which is something of an experiment. Therefore, not only do we wish it well, but it is only natural that we should also follow its progress with great interest. In addition, I would like to thank Ambassador Majoor and Ambassador Touray for their briefings.

We have heard a lot from previous speakers today. Much of what I wanted to say has been said by others, so I will be brief this morning. However, I do not want my brevity to be taken as any indication of a lack of interest in what is happening in Sierra Leone. On the contrary, Sierra Leone is an important partner for my Government and for the United Kingdom generally. There is great interest and support within the United Kingdom for Sierra Leone and its people, and the peaceful transition that has been made to President Koroma is to be welcomed. It was very good to be able to hear from Ambassador Touray about the prospects for constitutional change.

We would like to use this occasion to urge the Government to reinvigorate coordination with its development partners, particularly in order to realize President Koroma's Agenda for Change. The United Nations has an important role to play here, and the Government of Sierra Leone should feel able to make full use of UNIPSIL in that regard.

Some very good work has been done by UNIPSIL over the past few months. It has begun to work with the Political Parties Registration Commission and has made very good use of the election basket fund, and its work to help with the biannual review of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework has been very important for Sierra Leone's continued journey towards effective development.

Along with others, we hope that UNIPSIL will engage in further high-level advocacy on countering the threat of narcotics, on conflict prevention and resolution and on ensuring that the Anti-Corruption Commission actually delivers. Unless those three critical areas of work are taken forward, it will be impossible for UNIPSIL to deliver on its other targets.

I have three questions that, I hope, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General might be able to address in his later remarks.

With regard to the assessment of peacebuilding so far and the objectives for this year, what other indicators of success does he think we should be following, and what other objectives, if any, would he like to see added for 2009?

Secondly, we would be interested to hear a little bit more about the military coup in Guinea. What is its impact on Sierra Leone and on the work of UNIPSIL?

Finally, I wish to make two process points. First, I would be grateful for an assurance that in the next report, there will be some agreed outputs and indicators of success. As I said at the beginning of my statement, it is important that this new, experimental integrated mission be properly evaluated to see if it can be used as a model in other areas. We obviously hope that it can. But, as I said, proper monitoring will be key to that.

Lastly, I would just like to place on record our disappointment that, although UNIPSIL has finally deployed, it took such a long time to reach that stage. We recognize that the appointment of the Executive Representative also took a long time to be confirmed and that some positions in UNIPSIL are still not filled.

We do not believe that, in a small mission such as UNIPSIL and in a country such as Sierra Leone — which still has its fragilities — that is a tenable way to proceed. Thus, either now or at some later point, we would be very interested to hear how the United Nations might change its processes to improve the way in which it carries out this sort of thing in future.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to thank the delegation of France for its efforts during a very complex month for the work of the Council.

Mexico welcomes the first report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) (S/2009/59) and wishes Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg every success in his efforts as head of that Office. We are also grateful for the participation of our colleague Ambassador Majoor of the Netherlands, Chairman of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ambassador Shekou Touray, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, who informed us about his Government's ongoing efforts. We would like to emphasize the positive situation in Sierra Leone after years of conflict, which is reflected in the absence of armed groups and the progress achieved in political stabilization and peacebuilding.

In Sierra Leone, the United Nations has encouraged efforts towards political, legal, economic and administrative reform so as to further promote development. Now, it is essential to start training local human resources and avoid long-term dependence. To that end, the Security Council and other United Nations bodies must not try to work alone. On the contrary, they must encourage and support the initiatives of countries in the region that have a better understanding of local realities and are in a better position to promote cooperation and development. Sierra Leone is now in a post-conflict reconstruction phase, which compels the Organization to provide its support and planning capacities.

We recognize the progress that the United Nations presence has generated in fundamental areas, including the promotion of dialogue among the primary national actors to avoid new tribal conflicts; support for the strengthening of the rule of law and the consolidation of institutions; political support and technical advice to strengthen the national Human Rights Commission; and the training of security forces, among others. Promoting the consolidation of those efforts in the medium term is a priority task for UNIPSIL.

In the area of human rights, we recognize as a major step forward the enactment of the Child Rights Act and the plan for a law on gender justice. We also welcome the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and support the efforts to achieve transitional justice to promote the rule of law and strengthen peace and national reconciliation.

Despite all this progress, Mexico is concerned by the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General, which points out that, in the context of international organized crime, Sierra Leone is increasingly being used as a route for the trafficking of drugs and arms, acts of piracy have occurred along the coastline of that country, potentially destabilizing tribal disputes continue, and the economic situation is deteriorating, with particular impact on the cost of food.

Mexico therefore believes it critical for UNIPSIL to assist the Government of Sierra Leone in promoting dialogue and coordination in a context of shared responsibility with countries in the region, in particular Liberia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire, in order to jointly combat the trafficking of drugs and arms that are threatening the security and stability of the country and the region and that cannot be successfully tackled without the support of the international community.

Mexico also recognizes the work undertaken by the Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone through the country-specific meeting, to which a number of representatives have referred. The mobilization of resources facilitated by the Commission to support the implementation of development projects in the country has been essential to further consolidate the peace process. Similarly, the Commission's work to promote understanding and dialogue between the Government and other actors involved in the political process is encouraging.

We support the efforts of the Commission to broaden the donor base, which will give the country the necessary financial resources for the population to benefit from the dividends of peace and reconciliation

as soon as possible. That is particularly relevant in the current global financial climate, in which the flow of international development assistance may be reduced.

It is essential to ensure a solid United Nations presence in Sierra Leone with sufficient capacity to continue supporting the work of the Government, the Commission and all national, regional and international partners through a joint vision that supports the socio-economic development of the country. The Agenda for Change, to which Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the United Nations referred today, deserves our solid support. We continue to support all UNIPSIL activities to date that have allowed it to maximize its resources and meet its objectives.

Ms. Villalobos (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like previous speakers, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of February, and to thank the delegation of France for its presidency in January. We would also like to thank the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), Mr. Von der Schulenberg, and the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Frank Majoor, Chairman of the country-specific meeting on Sierra Leone within the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings and, in particular, the work they have undertaken to fulfil their mandates. We also thank Ambassador Touray, who spoke on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone, for his statement.

My delegation believes that national reconciliation and unity in Sierra Leone are of the highest priority and require the participation and active commitment of all sectors of society. The ethnic and regional divisions in Sierra Leone should continue to be addressed — a task in which the multiparty Parliament of Sierra Leone has an important role.

Another fundamental component in the national reconciliation process is the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in particular the reparations programme for victims of the conflict, which still needs greater international support.

Equally urgent is the review of institution building. A system with stable institutions that strengthens rights and the rule of law is absolutely essential to consolidating peace, promoting development and actively contributing to the greater integration of Sierra Leone into international processes.

However, we must be quite clear that, if they are to achieve their crucial role, building institutions and strengthening the rule of law require tackling corruption head on, which includes greater transparency in public management and accountability and strengthening a culture that fights impunity. In that regard, we recognize the work of the Anti-Corruption Commission and its efforts to involve civil society and other national interested parties in monitoring the implementation of a national strategy to combat corruption. We also recognize the support provided by UNIPSIL and the Peacebuilding Commission to assist the Government in that fight.

This Council must pay particular attention to the growing threat to security in Sierra Leone posed by drug trafficking, a problem that affects other countries in the region and requires a resolute response. Otherwise, all efforts made in other areas may be undermined and ultimately prove futile. That is why we believe it important for the Government and UNIPSIL to work together in implementing the Plan Action against Drug Trafficking and Related Organized Crime, based on the Regional Action Plan adopted by member States of the Economic Community of West African States. Clearly, we are dealing with a regional issue and it is therefore necessary to support and strengthen the capacity of regional bodies to address those and other issues, such as piracy, with a regional approach.

The Government of Sierra Leone is facing challenges that we all know in its efforts to consolidate economic and social development, support a democratic Government, reform the security and justice sectors and integrate the country's youth into its economic and social structures.

In that context, the support of the international community cannot be overlooked. The joint work of the Government and UNIPSIL in implementing President Koroma's Agenda for Change strategy is a step in the right direction. However, further complementary efforts are needed, as indicated in the strategic framework of the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone and in the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework.

I should like to conclude by urging the Government of Sierra Leone to redouble its efforts. We

reiterate our support for UNIPSIL and the work of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and call for greater support from the international community for the processes under way in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): First of all, Mr. President, I should like to congratulate you formally on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. I should also like to thank France for its chairmanship during the month of January.

I should like to thank the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, for his briefing. We have a long-standing and positive experience of cooperating with him, and we are impressed by the leadership that he has provided for the comprehensive and innovative approach the United Nations has chosen for its presence in Sierra Leone.

Like others, we believe that the progressive movement of a peacekeeping effort towards a comprehensive peacebuilding and reconstruction effort can serve as a model for United Nations operations elsewhere. Bringing together various branches of the United Nations family under one roof has very many advantages. Given the challenges that Sierra Leone faces in areas such as corruption and organized crime, we welcome in particular the direct inclusion of the expertise of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and we hope that the UNODC's contribution can be further enhanced.

At the same time, cooperation with the work of the country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission on Sierra Leone, under the able leadership of Ambassador Frank Majoor of the Netherlands, is essential. Though peacebuilding as such has not yet been completed, we believe that the success achieved so far can again serve as an example for efforts of this kind in other countries of the region. Nonetheless, a number of challenges remain to be faced by Sierra Leone, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and the donor community. I would focus on three.

First, if the strategy of the international donor community is to succeed, it is essential that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund gradually put more emphasis on poverty reduction. Sierra Leone's Agenda for Change reflects the major challenges in this regard, but good progress in economic performance could be jeopardized by the high level of youth unemployment. It is against this background that initiatives like the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) project addressing youth unemployment in the Mano River region are of particular importance and need to be strengthened.

In this context, I should also like to mention that the fight against youth unemployment was a major component of the resolution adopted at the end of the 2007 Ouagadougou Conference on Peace and Security in West Africa, organized by Burkina Faso and Austria. We continue to support the aforementioned UNIDO effort.

Secondly, organized crime and related challenges such as drug trafficking, corruption and the proliferation of small arms must remain high on our agenda. As these problems have cross-border implications, as the representative of Costa Rica has just stated, we believe that they should be addressed through regional approaches. In this context, I should first of all like to commend Sierra Leone for having already ratified the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We believe that it is very important for this ratification process to continue and to be concluded successfully. I should also like to mention, as other speakers have done, the ECOWAS Action Plan against Drug Trafficking, which is another excellent example of successful regional cooperation. UNODC's input to the United Nations Joint Vision document forms a sound basis for a long-term, comprehensive and coordinated response to illicit drug trafficking and the serious threat that drug abuse poses to the economic and social integration of youth in Sierra Leone.

Thirdly, we believe that two activities are crucial with regard to reconciliation: the follow-up to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the proceedings of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission contains not only an impartial historical record of the conflict in the country, but also far-reaching and comprehensive recommendations for addressing the root causes of the conflict and promoting reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as some speakers have already mentioned, also proposed a reparations programme, with particular emphasis on the needs of amputees, war-wounded and the victims of sexual

violence. We call on the Government of Sierra Leone to intensify its efforts to systematically follow up and implement these very important recommendations.

The Special Court made important progress in 2008 and plans to complete its activities by 2010. Besides its importance as a symbol of justice and accountability, it has also provided capacity-building opportunities to national professionals, who have gained skills in the field of the rule of law. From our point of view, it would be important to preserve and use those skills in Sierra Leone. To that end, incentives should be created to avoid a brain drain.

I should like to conclude by noting that Austria is encouraged by the consistent trend towards respect for civil and political rights in Sierra Leone and by the initiatives of the Sierra Leone Government in favour of the promotion of the rights of women.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): At the outset, I should like to thank Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg for presenting the first report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) (S/2009/59), as well as for his useful comments and remarks. My delegation should also like to thank Ambassador Frank Majoor, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission country-specific configuration for Sierra Leone, and Ambassador Shekou Touray, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, for their interventions.

Croatia is pleased to note the successful transition from the United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone to UNIPSIL, which brings together the whole United Nations family, its programmes, activities and funds in Sierra Leone. We are of the opinion that the current UNIPSIL model has already started to bear fruit and produce further positive results. We would like to commend two major political parties, the All Peoples' Congress and the Sierra Leone People's Party, for their continuing interaction, which has been both constructive and, as we have been informed by the Secretary-General, cordial. This new climate contributes greatly to the stability of the country and the prevention of further conflict. However, it is a fact that Sierra Leone is still divided along ethnic and geographic lines and that there is an urgent need for further dialogue and cooperation among all relevant stakeholders.

Croatia commends the Government of Sierra Leone for having "made the fight against corruption a key element of its reform platform". We welcome the decentralization of the work of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the opening of its offices in the northern and eastern regions of the country. We find particularly important the development of an action plan whose main aim is to address the growing threats from rising illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, based on the Action Plan adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Drug Trafficking held by the Economic Community of West African States last year. It brings various security agencies together under standard operating procedures, with a clear division of work and responsibilities. This is an approach that we fully support.

We welcome the first report on the state of human rights produced by the newly operational national Human Rights Commission, as well as the programmes and activities of the Commission. At the same time, we encourage the Government to continue to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including the reparations programmes for victims of the civil conflict.

Croatia strongly supports security sector reform in Sierra Leone since it is precisely the security institutions that are the major guarantors of peace consolidation and democratic governance. We commend UNIPSIL for its substantial input into the development of policing standards in the country and for its efforts to strengthen partnership between the police and local communities. On the other hand, it is evident that, despite the progress reported, much remains to be done. The main challenges facing the authorities of Sierra Leone — be they immediate or short-term, like rising food and fuel prices, drug trafficking and piracy, or medium- and long-term, like underdevelopment or youth unemployment — all pose serious threats to the gains achieved to date. The degree of success achieved by the Government of Sierra Leone in confronting these challenges will largely define the future of the country.

In that regard, we welcome President Koroma's Agenda for Change, which aims at a fundamental transformation of the economy through economic growth and human development. At the same time, it clearly identifies the main priorities and proposes avenues of action. It represents a major change in attitude from aid dependence and recovery to growth and development through the creation of an environment conducive to private sector development and a stronger inclusion of the diaspora.

There is no doubt that firm political leadership and continued international support will be required to implement that ambitious agenda. We also welcome the development of the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone, which reflects a strategic framework outlining United Nations priorities in Sierra Leone and effectively channels all available resources. We hope that those mutually reinforcing documents will significantly accelerate the socio-economic recovery of the country and ensure permanent stabilization of its peace and security.

Finally, we commend the Peacebuilding Commission for the crucial role it is playing in Sierra Leone in attracting continuous donor support to the country. We welcome the second progress report on the implementation of the commitments contained in the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, as well as the recommendations contained therein on the required next steps.

The President: I shall now take the floor in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

First, I express my appreciation for the kind words addressed to the presidency of February. It is important that the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) swiftly reach its full operational capacity under the new leadership of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg. We are encouraged by the increasing stability of Sierra Leone as well as by the successful elections in July 2008 and the by-elections of last month. Such progress indicates that a democratic culture is now taking further root in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone represents a model of the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. Major peacebuilding challenges remain, however, in good governance and creating development opportunities for the public. We believe the following areas should receive priority attention focused on the human security perspective: first, strengthening good governance, core democratic institutions, dialogue for national cohesion and reconciliation and accountability in public services. We support the efforts by President Koroma to fight corruption and to change the attitude of those working in the public sector.

Secondly, drug trafficking and piracy in Sierra Leone's coastal waters must be controlled. The concerted efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone and international partners must be accelerated. Regional cooperation through the Economic Community of West African States is important in addressing those emerging threats. Thirdly, measures must be taken to improve the livelihood of the people. Urgent support needs to be extended to create job opportunities for young people. We also need to support the Government's efforts to reduce its high dependency on food imports and to achieve self-sufficiency by 2010, putting to use the valuable human resource of young people in rural areas. Electricity supply and basic transportation infrastructure are essential as well.

Those priority areas are all reflected in President Koroma's Agenda for Change, the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone. I hope that synergy among those frameworks can be achieved. I particularly appreciate the initiative of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General in formulating the United Nations Joint Vision. It represents a conscious effort to address priority areas in a fully coordinated and integrated manner by stakeholders on the ground: the United Nations system, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank. We believe that such an approach could provide a good model for other peacebuilding efforts. What matters most is not the strategy itself, but its implementation.

The international community should strengthen political, economical and technical support. We must keep up the momentum. Together with traditional partners, efforts are needed to attract new partners and broaden the donor base. We welcome the many new partners now joining. Japan has extended assistance in the energy sector and for youth employment and is now considering assistance for rice production through the framework of the Coalition for African Rice Development.

We commend the good work done by the Peacebuilding Commission and believe that the Council should endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the second biannual review of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. It may also be appropriate to examine the frequency of reporting as the situation warrants.

I now resume the functions of the presidency. Since there were some questions and comments raised,

I invite the Executive Representative to take the floor again.

Mr. von der Schulenburg: Let me first thank all of the members of the Security Council for the kind words of support for the work of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), our United Nations country team and to myself. The support is very encouraging to me and will be of assistance when I go back to Sierra Leone and to the work being done there.

Let me try to answer a few of the questions. Of course members have asked me the most difficult questions — about benchmarks. But before answering, let me put that in context. I think that a peacebuilding mission is a new type of mission. Not everyone may be aware that a peacebuilding mission raises a lot of conceptual issues. We have tried in the first three months to respond to most of them. The first one is to what degree is an executive representative to the Secretary-General required, rather than a resident coordinator? I think we must all be frank about that question. Does it add value or simply an extra layer? If an extra layer, then what is that extra layer? We have had extensive discussions with our United Nations agency colleagues and I think we may be on the right track in one area in that we receive so much support from United Nations agencies that could potentially see us as an additional layer blocking some of the sunshine.

The other issue is — what actually makes an executive representative credible, since we no longer have armed forces on the ground and we usually do not have funding, as do other agencies. In that situation, what makes one credible? I think that is a question that we must all answer very clearly. I have given some of our responses to that question to the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as what I think must be done.

The third issue is the relationship between a peacebuilding mission on the ground and the Peacebuilding Commission here in New York. Since we are probably the first one — at least in a fully integrated sense — I think that this is a necessary discussion, and I hope to continue my discussion with Ambassador Majoor on how I see that relationship. I personally think that the Peacebuilding Commission is of extreme importance to us because, although all of the United Nations agencies have executive boards to report back to and they get feedback from the Member States that support the agencies, the integrated peacebuilding mission actually has no one to play that role, unless the Peacebuilding Commission takes over the function of endorsing our efforts, so we can negotiate with Member States.

The final issue here is: how do we integrate a political mandate with a development mandate, assuming that in a post-conflict situation politics actually is largely development — creating jobs, providing services and so forth. That is exactly why we did not choose the traditional format of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, but instead chose the Joint Vision document, in order to be able to combine those two areas into one Joint Vision, which is now supported by 15 United Nations agencies that have signed on. That is very encouraging. Having said that, the seven pages of the Joint Vision only describe the directions.

We have what we call one plus four objectives, or priority areas. One is mainly a political area, in which I invite United Nations agencies to participate. The others are more development priority areas. We are now in the process of detailing the steps to be taken under the five objectives. I think the process will be completed by March 2009.

There has been considerable progress made on those, especially on some tricky issues like youth employment. We have recently agreed not only among the United Nations agencies but with all major donors to provide the President with a five-page advisory note on what could be done in the area of youth employment — one of the major risk areas of the country. When I go back that is a discussion that will have to be continued and it must be followed up by the creation of a youth commission.

We have also given to the President, also in agreement with the others, an advisory note on the issue of illicit drug trafficking, in particular on coastal security and finding different approaches to resolving that issue. One of our roles is to try to get not only the United Nations community behind us, but also our main development partners. We have a similar concept now on health care, and we will do this also for the other issues.

What I had hoped in particular — and this is the reason for having a special session of the Peacebuilding Commission as discussed with Ambassador Majoor with the support of the Government of Sierra Leone — was to be able to move

from the stage of defining general directions, to establishing programmatic areas where we could think of establishing concrete benchmarks. I think I would also ask for patience in this instance. This is the first time, and I think it will be very well consolidated.

In that context, I would also like to respond to the question from the representative of Uganda about the multi-donor trust fund. One of the things we have agreed on among our United Nations colleagues is that we would learn from the experience of the Peacebuilding Fund, when we got the money and then tried to find projects on which to spend it. This time, we would like to have the development framework and present to the Peacebuilding Commission not only the general policies, but, for each of the objectives, the programmes which we want to support. It is a long consultative process; only when it is complete would we open the multi-donor trust fund, because the funding should actually follow from concrete things. We do not want to have an open-ended fund because that has created some of the problems we have experienced with the implementation of the Peacebuilding Fund.

Let me also respond briefly to the question of Guinea. Guinea is a concern, and we have heard from the representative of Sierra Leone that his Government is very concerned. I can confirm that, too, from my discussions with the President. Guinea is a country that has a very long border with Sierra Leone. As I mentioned, certain parts of the border — such as at Yenga — are still in dispute. There are a lot of cultural and ethnic relationships on both sides. According to the Government, the largest expatriate community of Guineans lives in Sierra Leone, so whatever happens there will have an impact on Guinea.

From our side, there are two more immediate things we are trying to monitor. With the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, we have agreed to monitor the border, together with the newly established refugee office, to see if there is any unusual movement and to predict if there will be any movement from Guinea into Sierra Leone. For the time being, there are no movements which we can detect, but we will keep on monitoring.

The other aspect is, of course, international criminal activity. One of the worries we have — although I make no accusations in this regard — is, of course, that neighbouring countries that experience a crisis very easily become the point of flight for criminals in Sierra Leone, as we saw with the seizure of the plane and the new problem of piracy, which many believe comes from areas in the neighbourhood that are less stable than Sierra Leone.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.